POETICAL ESSAYS,

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Spoken at the ANNUAL VISITATION

OF

TUNBRIDGE SCHOOL.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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FRIENDSHIP.

A

MORAL ESSAY.

WHO feels the glow of Friendſhip's kindling flame?
'Tis all a poet's dream, an empty name.
Love, the ſoft band, which nature gave to bind,
In one firm chain, the univerſal kind;
Cold and contracted ſinks in torpid reſt,
Or glows concentred in a ſingle breaſt.

Ceaſe to complain: behold yon rich man's board;
See thouſands crowd devoted round my lord.

See, and confeſs, that Friendſhip yet can glow,
Nor like Aſtræa leaves the world below.

Yes I behold: do thou behold in turn
For one poor mite a Beliſarius mourn.
Yon ſuppliant crowd, that throngs round Cræſus' door,
Not Cræſus loves, but Cræſus' boundleſs ſtore.
On Irus fawn; to him ſubmiſſive bend.---
I yield, and grant there is at length---a Friend.

'Tis Matho's bliſs to hear the table roar;
Laugh at his jeſts, and Matho aſks no more.
To laugh all eager haſte, who haſte to dine;
The wit is flat, but poignant is the wine.

Hard, as the gold, it loves, yon miſer's heart
Ne'er felt the ſocial pang, the pleaſing ſmart.
Aſk you, why fawns the crowd on Harpax ſtill?
Harpax is old---and Harpax makes a will.

Frank, open, eaſy, and ſuſpecting none.
Clodio poſſeſſion takes at twenty-one.
All cling around the youth, ſo kind ſo good!
All cling---as leeches cling to drink the blood.

What though in ancient volumes here and there
Some claſſic bard records a ſocial pair?
Mere fables theſe to grace the poet's page;
Mere dreams ideal of a golden age,
Wond'rous as Centaur-forms which fancy drew,
Wond'rous, as thoſe, as thoſe, fictitious too.

Yet one there is, the muſe ſhall dare commend,
At once the ſage, the patriot and the friend.
Tully's fair page, which Friendſhip's laws defin'd,
Shines but a tranſcript of a fairer mind:
That mind, which virtue, taſte, and ſenſe could ſee,
That mind, which ſaw them, Atticus, in thee.

Turn from the reaſoning tribe,---ſurvey the train,
The race that roves unheeded o'er the plain;
And mark how Love and Friendſhip, fled from men,
Glow in the wood and animate the den.
Brutes among brutes a ſocial feeling know,
And tygers tenderneſs to tygers ſhew,
The feather'd nation in yon myrtle grove
Warbles the tender tales of mutual love;
And ſee beneath yon hawthorn's vernal ſhade,
The tender lambkins cloſe embracing laid;
All, all together league to guard from foes,
To ſweeten life, and eaſe their little woes.
O man! behold; beholding bluſh to find
That love, thou wanteſt, in the ſavage kind.

Nor need we only view the beſtial race;
Man on his fellow man ſhall bring diſgrace;
Unpoliſh'd man, from ſimple nature's hand,
Unpoliſh'd man on Africk's diſtant land,

Shall

Shall ſhame the haughty tribe, tho' form'd by rules,
Reſtrain'd by laws and civiliz'd in ſchools.
Nor think unmeaning cynic's idly rail;
To prove and clear th'aſſertion, hear a tale.

On that fam'd coaſt, where life itſelf is ſold,
And human forms, like trinkets, truck'd for gold;
From earlieſt age, ſincere, ingenuous, true,
Two youths the gentle cares of Friendſhip knew.
Did this repoſe beneath the ſultry ray?
That wakeful ſat and drove each harm away:
Both hand in hand, in queſt of daily food,
Travers'd the ſun-burnt heath or ſhady wood:
Both ſhar'd alike each varying hope and fear;
Both gave to joy a ſmile, to grief a tear:
Alike in all, alike ſupremely bleſt,
If bliſs ſupreme e'er deign'd on earth to reſt.
It chanc'd, in evil hour, along the ſtrand,
Far from his mate, our Wand'rer trod the ſand:

An Europèan trader ſaw the prey,
And bore the trembling captive far away.
And now all ſilent, ſad, and wond'ring why
His lov'd, his loſt companion was not nigh,
To find his dearer ſelf with lonely tread
Along the ſhore, the youth deſerted ſped.
When lo! a beck'ning hand at diſtant view
Hail'd the deſponding youth, and bade adieu.
The youth beheld, and ſtraight he ſought the wave;
To gain a Friend reſolv'd to groan, a ſlave.
The captive ſaw, and, mad with grief and pain,
Plung'd forth to meet his comrade on the main.
Mean-time the winds to mountains roll the tide,---
The Friends juſt met,---embrac'd,---then ſunk and dy'd.

The balm of life, the ſalt, the choiceſt flow'r!
O ſtrive! ('tis worth the labour) to reſtore.
Unchear'd by Friendſhip's all-enlivening ray,
Life is a gloomy ſhade, a deſert way;

So,

So, ſhould yon radiant orb's effulgent fire,
Pluck'd from its ſhining ſphere, at length expire;
Strait overcloud the realms of chearful light,
Chaotic darkneſs and eternal night.

But how?---ſay how bring back the long-loſt gueſt?
Teach us the bliſs impatient to be bleſt.---
Let virtue pure, exalted and refin'd,
Untainted honor, dignify the mind:
But oh! be far the baleful race of care;
Pride, paſſion, envy, avarice, come not there.
So ſhall fair Friendſhip, from her exile, deign
To rule the ſympathetic breaſt again.
Each heart a kindred heart ſhall quickly find,
And each be bleſt the more, the more combin'd.

Some modeſt roof beneath, in yon ſtill vale,
Where health and peace come wafted in each gale,
Bleſt, who, as life's ſmooth current glides away,
In friendſhip's tranquil joys deceive the day;

O'er

O'er the freſh lawn fair nature's works explore,
Fair nature's Author in thoſe works adore,
Together mark the bud, and cull the flow'r,
Together wonder at the plaſtic pow'r,
Nor rage, nor ſtrife, nor pride, nor envy know,
Each joy enhance, and mitigate each woe.

Quit, quit the narrow breaſt to one confin'd,
Go ſearch the man, that feels for all the kind;
The god-like man, the univerſal Friend,
Whoſe bounty flows and flowing knows no end.
But where, ah where, in what Utopian cell?
Say where the heavenly virtue deigns to dwell?
Can hearts, which ne'er the cloſer paſſion prove,
Embrace the wide extent of gen'ral love?
Heroes, like theſe, might grace the times of yore;
Perhaps mere creatures from the brain of More.
Or if, at length, in theſe degenerate days,
Such worth the muſe can find and finding praiſe;

'Tis

'Tis not in cities, nor the ſplendid ring,
'Tis not in crowds, that cringe around a king.
But lo! where rears its head yon village ſpire,
Where peeps the ſtraw-built ſhed beneath the briar:
There lives a pious, ſimple, reverend ſage
With wiſdom fraught from Heav'n's unerring page;
And only lives to comfort, to relieve,
To bid pain ſmile, and want forget to grieve;
To clothe the naked, and the hungry feed;
In all its hundred forms to ſuccour need.
Unecho'd by the voice of giddy fame,
Think'ſt thou ſuch virtue, but an empty name?
Such virtue aſks not fame's applauding roar;
Since Heav'n approves, ſuch virtue aſks no more.
So yon bright ſun illumes the deſert way,
Nor ſhines alone, where Perſians kneel to pray.